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SUBJECT: SINGAPORE UNSURE ABOUT THE BENEFITS OF IRENA

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¶11. (SBU) Singapore supports the goal of increasing R&D in renewable energy technologies and making such technologies more affordable for developing countries. However, the GOS is unsure whether the German-proposed International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) is the best approach, Hazri Hassan, Deputy Director for International Relations at the Ministry of Environment and Water Resources, told Econoffs January 6. Singapore does not oppose IRENA or the idea of creating an international body focused on renewable energy, but it shares U.S. concerns (reftel) that IRENA will be a duplicative entity that might dilute efforts to develop the use of renewable energy. The GOS is also concerned about high membership fees that will be assessed by IRENA, Hassan noted.

He indicated that Singapore might explore ways to participate in IRENA activities on an ad hoc basis without becoming a member. Hassan was not aware of any GOS officials traveling to the IRENA launch later this month, but he could not say whether a member of the Singapore mission in Germany might attend as an observer.

¶12. (SBU) The GOS has been active in encouraging R&D in renewable energy as a means to ensure Singapore's long term energy security, Hassan said. Agencies such as the Economic Development Board encourage foreign direct investment in Singapore, while the National Research Foundation helps fund research and education in new energy technologies. The GOS prefers to allow market forces to work so that the most efficient and commercially viable energy technology is deployed in the most appropriate location. For example, Singapore cannot use hydropower but might be able one day to use solar on a large scale. An international body like IRENA might be most effective if it helps poor countries deploy renewable energy technologies that might otherwise be too expensive, Hassan suggested.

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